

Drunk Driving Is More Costly

You may already know that penalties for driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs have been increased and expanded.

I would like to explain why I voted for all 13 bills in the package approved by the Legislature and signed into law earlier this year by Gov. Locke.

Drunk drivers kill or maim hundreds of people every year. The numbers are gruesome. According to information provided by the governor, more than 300 people died and 1,000 were injured last year by drunk drivers.

There were 12,000 accidents in which one of the drivers had been drinking, and property damage in 1997 from these wrecks was in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

With such a background of death and destruction, it was time for the Legislature to act.

A key new law lowers the allowable blood-alcohol level from .10 percent to .08 percent. It has been estimated that the lower level will save 35 to 40 lives annually statewide.

Other new drunk driving laws will mean:

- Suspension of driver’s license without going to court first.
- A limit of one chance in a lifetime to avoid prosecution by entering an alcohol treatment program.
- Mandatory ignition locks for drivers arrested with blood-alcohol levels above .15 percent.
- An increase from \$50 to \$150 in the fees paid to get a suspended license back.
- Electronic home monitoring for repeat offenders after they complete jail sentences.
- The possibility of impounding cars when a driver’s license has been suspended or revoked. DUI is a major reason licenses are lost in the first place.

Most of the new laws become effective in June or on Jan. 1, 1999.

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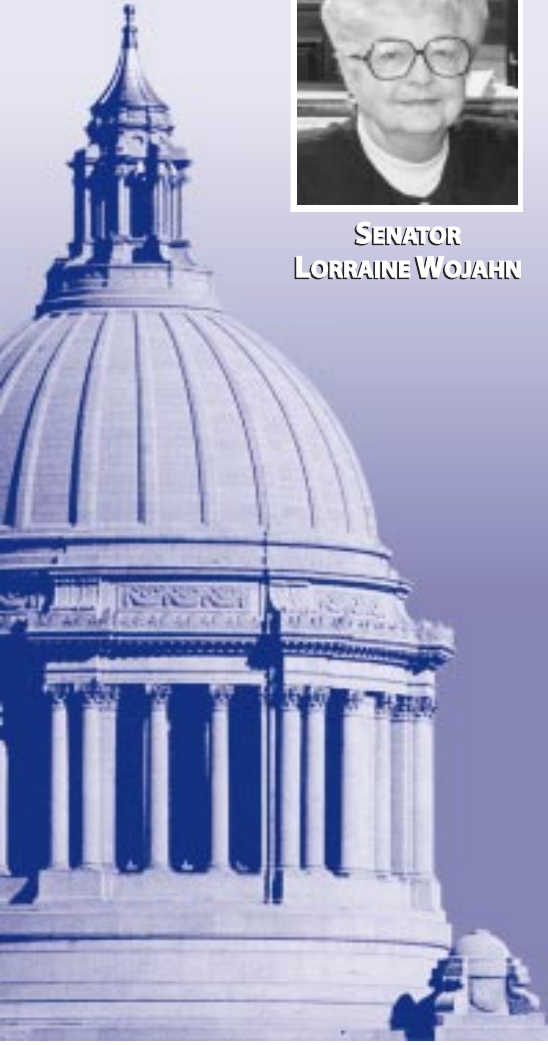
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27th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



SENATOR
LORRAINE WOJAHN



Senator Wojahn can be reached by
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1-800-562-6000

1998 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Thanks To Those Who Helped End Developmental Disability Fight

A long-standing controversy over service and housing options for the developmentally disabled appears to be headed for resolution with passage of SSB 6751.

Thanks in this case belong not just to the Senate and House of Representatives, but also to the dedicated parents and other stakeholders who worked diligently during 1997 to prepare an acceptable proposal for the 1998 Legislature.

In the end, the Legislature affirmed the commitment to allow persons with developmental disabilities the opportunity to choose where they live. The choice must be supported by state policy and allow, as much as possible, for people to stay in their own homes or communities.

Property Tax Relief

Property tax relief has been increased for senior citizens and disabled persons who own their own homes and have income below \$30,000 a year. The minimum age to apply is 61, with an exception for persons who are permanently disabled and may apply at any age.

The maximum income was increased \$2,000 by the Legislature this year. In addition to lower special or regular property tax levies, the value of a qualified home is frozen as of January 1 of the initial application year. A mobile home may qualify as a residence.

The new limits will apply to property tax payable in 1999 and thereafter.

If you have questions or wish to apply, please call the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer Customer Service Hotline in Tacoma at (253) 798-6111.

Silent Witness Exhibit Visits Capitol

The tragedy of domestic violence was on display before the Legislature this year in the form of the Silent Witness Exhibit, which consists of 31 life-size plywood silhouettes of women who were domestic violence murder victims in 1995.

Thirty of the cut-outs represent real women and the final silhouette was added to represent women whose deaths were erroneously ruled accidental or whose murders went unsolved.

Each silhouette contains a plaque listing information about the victim and judicial outcome of the case. Five of the victims were from Pierce County.

Domestic violence is second only to motor vehicle accidents as a cause of violent death of women.



Sen. Wojahn, second from the right, is shown with members of the Eastside Domestic Violence Program of Bellevue. The EDVP developed the Silent Witness Exhibit.

Ralph Seeley Remembered

The 27th District lost one of its most courageous residents earlier this year when attorney Ralph Seeley died at age 49 following a more than 10-year battle against cancer.

Mr. Seeley will be remembered in Olympia as a fighter who believed, until the end, that the state should legalize the medical use of marijuana to combat the dreadful effects of chemotherapy.

The goal Mr. Seeley sought may be within reach. In 1996, the Legislature provided \$60,000 for a study under the direction of the State Board of Pharmacy of the effectiveness of marijuana, synthetic marijuana and other drugs in controlling nausea and other debilitating effects of chemotherapy.

The final touches on a study proposal are being prepared by the University of Washington, which will conduct the field work.

Because marijuana will be used, federal approval is needed before the study may proceed.

Albers Mill Needs Attention

Historical preservation has long been popular in Tacoma for a number of reasons. Classic buildings have given the city a unique character, and preservation can turn eyesores into profit makers.

The Albers Mill on the Foss Waterway is a jewel in the rough. Built in 1904, the mill is a prime example of turn-of-the-century red brick construction and the largest building of its kind in the area.

But historic buildings do not last forever, and the immediate problem is an apparent shortage of funds to do a minimal amount of preservation so the mill holds together until its permanent fate is determined.

For my part, I will explore potential avenues of state funding to keep the Albers Mill project alive.
